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SUBJECT: BOSNIA: ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

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¶1. (SBU) Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) constitute the most numerous of the three constituent peoples in BiH and the majority group in the Federation of BiH and capital city Sarajevo. Given that the three constituent groups (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) are divided along ethnic-religious line, one of our primary goals is to restore confidence in a multiethnic future for BiH. As part of this strategy post continues to maintain a robust engagement with the Muslim community. In order to pursue our policy and public diplomacy objectives we have frequent contact with representatives of political parties identifying themselves as primarily Bosnian Muslims, whose members include many high-level government officials, including a member of the BiH Tri-Presidency, members of the BiH Council of Ministers as well as Parliament.

¶2. (SBU) We also meet regularly with members of the BiH Islamic Community, including its top leader Reis-ul-ulema Dr. Mustafa Ceric and with other senior muftis through the country to discuss political, human rights, refugee return, religious freedom and other issues. Members of the Bosniak political elite as well as the BiH Islamic Community constitute a significant percentage of our invitees to representational and other public diplomacy events.

¶3. (SBU) Along with the above contacts, post also engages in activities specifically targeted to promote mutual understanding with the sizable Islamic Community. During the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, the Ambassador hosts an annual Iftar dinner for members of the Islamic Community and several senior mission officials are regular participants in Iftar dinners hosted by the Islamic Community. In order to pursue our public diplomacy goals, especially with the younger generation of Muslim youth, we provide English language instruction through the English Language Access Microscholarship Program to several Islamic schools (Medressas) in Travnik, Tuzla, Sarajevo, Veliko Cajno, Cazin and Mostar. In past years each Access class had a total of ten students, with the exception of Tuzla which had 20 students. This year the number of participating students will rise to 120 countrywide.

¶4. (SBU) The Access program provides the only mixed gender classes that Medressa students are allowed to participate in. Through the English Teaching Fellow program, Post provides three English language teachers who work closely with the Medressa in Tuzla, the Medressa in Cazin and the Dzemal Bijedic University, whose students and faculty are predominantly Muslim in East Mostar. Through the Fulbright program, Post has arranged for a Fulbright Teaching Assistant

at the Islamic Faculty in Sarajevo. Post provides public diplomacy publications about the United States and aspects of U.S. life to the aforementioned Medressas and also makes them available to the wider Muslim (and non-Muslim) community through seven American Corners in the Mostar, Sarajevo, Doboj, Tuzla, Zenica, Banja Luka and Bihac. Furthermore, when nominating potential participants for the International Visitors Program, Post makes extra efforts to identify rising leaders in the Islamic Community for inclusion in the program.

ENGLISH